

DECATUR, ILLINOIS: A STUDY IN URBAN GEOGRAPHY*

BY

E. MURIEL POGGI

University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois

There are definite reasons for the location of every city, and most settlements are the result of certain physical conditions. A century or two ago the reasons were more definitely geographical than they are today, because, owing to many and varied inventions man is now able to overcome natural drawbacks, or rather turn what at one time were considered obstacles, to his account. We are all familiar with physical features which have led to the development of a city, such as water power in falls or rapids, as seen at St. Paul and Minneapolis; a portage between two waterways, as at old Fort Dearborn; a convenient site for bridging a river, as at St. Louis. There are many other reasons for settlements, some strategic, as seen in

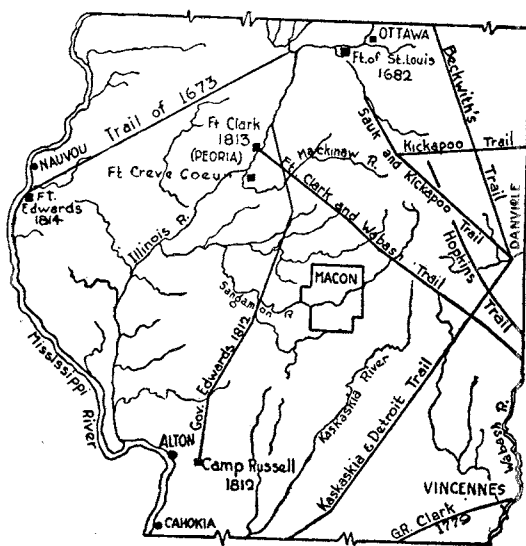


FIG. 1.—Illinois Indian trails (After Richmond, Mabel E., *Centennial History of Decatur and Macon County*, p. 12.)

the site of Quebec, others at the tidal limit of a river as seen in London which was also the lowest point at which the river Thames could be bridged. Oxford was the point on the upper Thames where the river could be forded by oxen. In some cases minerals were the attraction as at the site of Danville, Illinois, where Indian trails converged on salt supplies and on deposits of vermilion clay from which a rich red coloring matter was obtained.

* The writer wishes to acknowledge the valuable assistance of Mr. Royal B. McClelland of the Decatur Association of Commerce, and access to the Association's files. Mr. M. E. Lockhart of Niantic supplied the writer with first-hand information on land utilization and early development of the Decatur area.

In central Illinois there is such a sameness in the natural landscape and so few outstanding physical features that it is not always easy for the geographer to account for the location of settlements. The pioneer, however, was on the lookout for certain necessary requirements in choosing a site

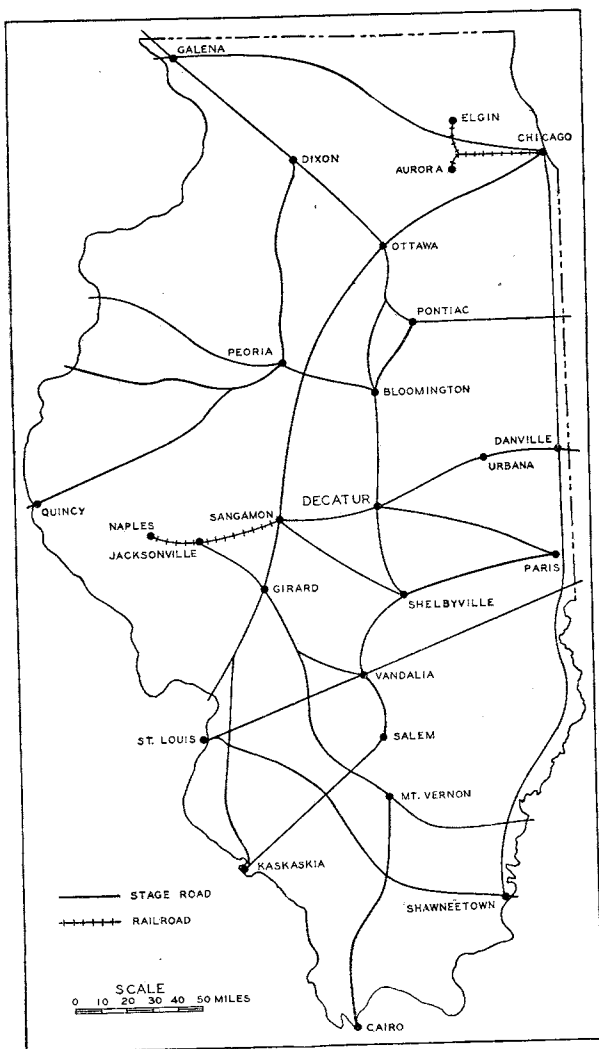


FIG. 2.—Stage routes in 1851 (After Richmond, Mabel E., *Centennial History of Decatur and Macon County*, p. 98.)

for his homestead, for example, a supply of good drinking water besides water for domestic purposes, timber for buildings, and fuel. If in addition to these there was good land for grazing and crops, access to means of transportation and power supplies, the site was considered especially attractive.

In any urban study the first consideration is an attempt to account for the original location of the settlement in question; so in the case of Decatur, we begin by consulting the historian and noting, very briefly, the chief steps which led to the establishment of the town site.

EARLY LOCATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY PATTERN

Illinois was admitted to the Union in 1818 with a population of about 35,000. Settlement was mainly along the wooded stream banks where there were supplies of timber for building material and for fuel, together with shade for cattle and a good water supply. On account of poor drainage the prairies were often inaccessible and unhealthful; so that even the Indian trails (Fig. 1) avoided them.

John Stevens settled three miles northwest of Decatur on the stream named for him about 1822. About 1824 the Ward family from Kentucky settled not far from the Sangamon River, to the south of where Lake Decatur lies today. Several families soon joined the Ward settlement, so that a little hamlet started here on the banks of the Sangamon. After Illinois was admitted to the Union the General Assembly began establishing roads. In 1824 men were named to "view, survey and locate" the first road to cross

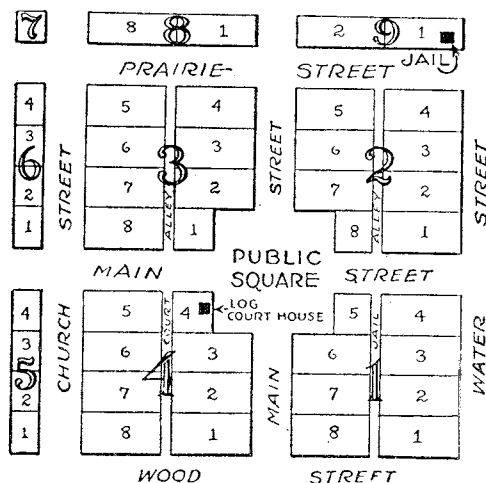


FIG. 3.—Plat of Decatur (After Richmond, Mabel E., *Centennial History of Decatur and Macon County*, p. 26.)

Macon County, which was the Springfield-Paris road. It ran several miles south of Decatur; but the route was changed, and in 1833 the Decatur-Springfield Road, which corresponds approximately to West Main Street and Route 10 of today, was laid out.¹

In 1829 the route for a second road in this area was surveyed. This was from Shelbyville through Ward's settlement and thence across Tazewell County to the mouth of the Big Vermilion on the Illinois River.² The laying of east-west and north-south roads which crossed at Decatur gave an impetus to settlement so that many families were established there by the end of 1829. The territory now known as Macon County was at that time attached to Shelby County, and the county seat was Shelbyville. With the increase in the number of newcomers on either side of the Sangamon it

¹ Richmond, Mabel. *Cent. History of Decatur and Macon County*, Decatur Review, Decatur, Ill., 1930, p. 15.

² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

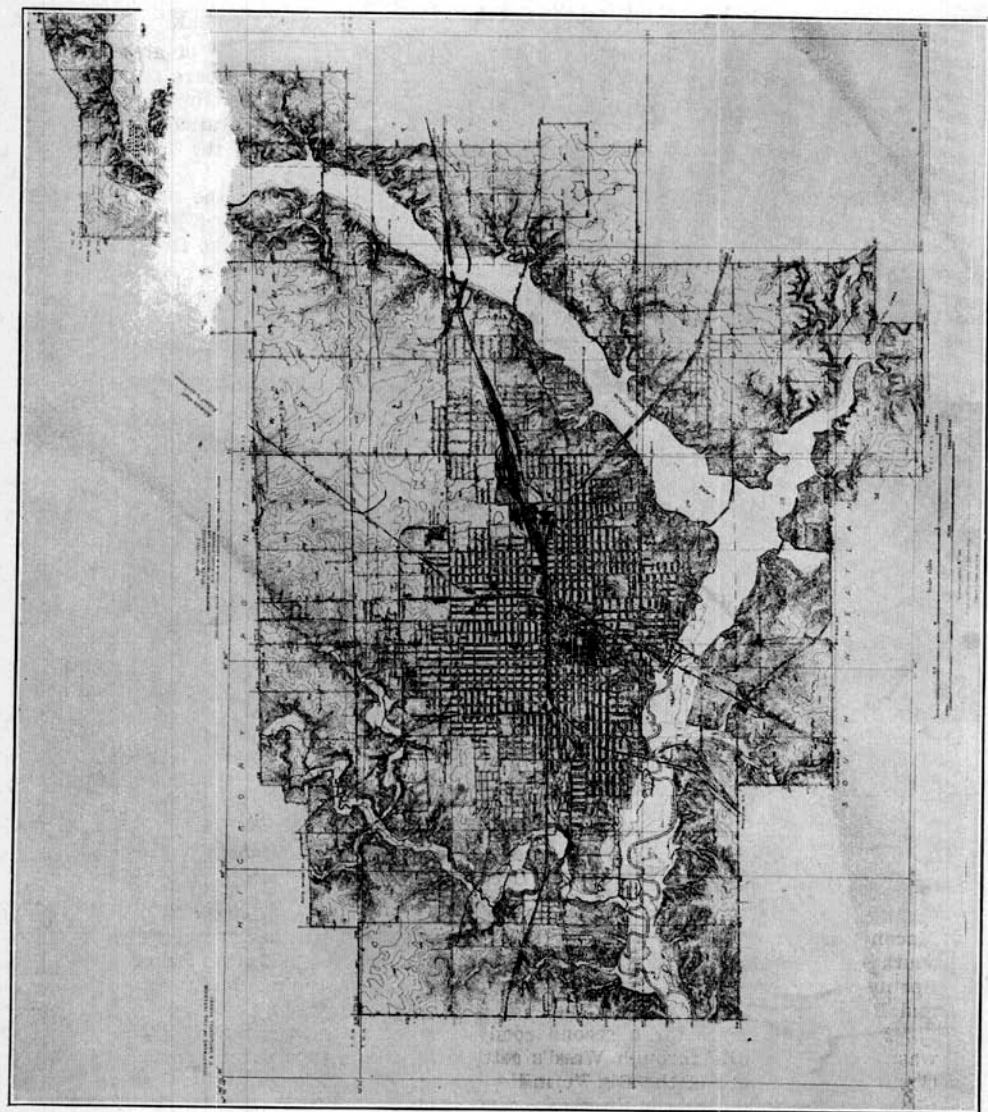
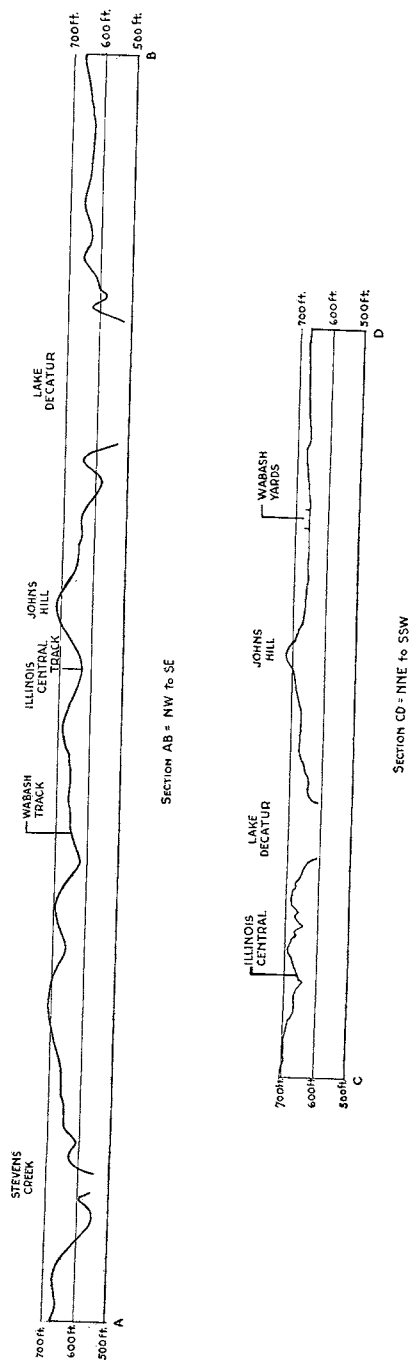


FIG. 4.—Topographic map of Decatur.



SECTIONS ACROSS DECATUR
FIG. 5.

A casual glance at the topographic map might cause one to ask why the original plat was not laid nearer the river, but closer inspection of the surroundings makes it clear that the best site was chosen. It is comparatively high, on rich soil, just to the north edge of the belt of rough timber soil which slopes down to the present lake. Much of this land is not utilized for buildings even today, and can be seen in Lincoln Park, Greenwood Cemetery, Decatur Park District, and so on (Fig. 4, Topographic Map, and Fig. 5, Profiles).



—*Courtesy Decatur Association of Commerce.*
FIG. 7.—Airplane map of Decatur and vicinity.

PHYSICAL BACKGROUND

1. *Soil.*—In studying the early development of Decatur the physical background is of primary importance as the most valuable natural resource—the soil—is the result of the physical conditions. These conditions are really an epitome of the glacial history of this part of the country. A discussion of the glacial geology of the Decatur area is outside the scope of this paper; it will be sufficient to state briefly that Decatur is situated on the eastern border of the Shelbyville Moraine which forms the southern and western boundary of the Wisconsin glaciation in the state (Fig. 6, Map of the Moraines of the Wisconsin Glaciation). The Sangamon valley swings round the east and south of the city, and Stevens Creek joins the Sangamon River to the west of the present residential section (Fig. 7, Airplane View of Decatur and Fig. 4, Topographic Map).

Macon County is, geologically speaking, very young, the Wisconsin ice sheet being the last to come down over the state. The soil retains a large proportion of plant foods originally present in the parent soil, and limestone, which is readily leached, is still present in abundance in the subsoil. The county soil map shows that Decatur is situated on the Upland Prairie soil of the Wisconsin glaciation. The less fertile timber soils extend along the banks of the rivers.⁴ As we have seen, the early town plat avoided these and the pioneers who settled first along the streams moved on to the better prairie soil soon after the town plat was laid.⁵

The land values in Macon County are among the highest in Illinois. In 1920 when land values reached the highest peak and the average for the State was \$164.20 per acre, the average for Macon County was just under \$300.00 per acre (\$298.99). Even in 1930 when the State average had dropped to \$83.24 per acre, Macon County average stood at \$142.59. Only three counties, Cook, DuPage and Lake, all of which are in the Chicago area, have higher land values than Macon County.⁶

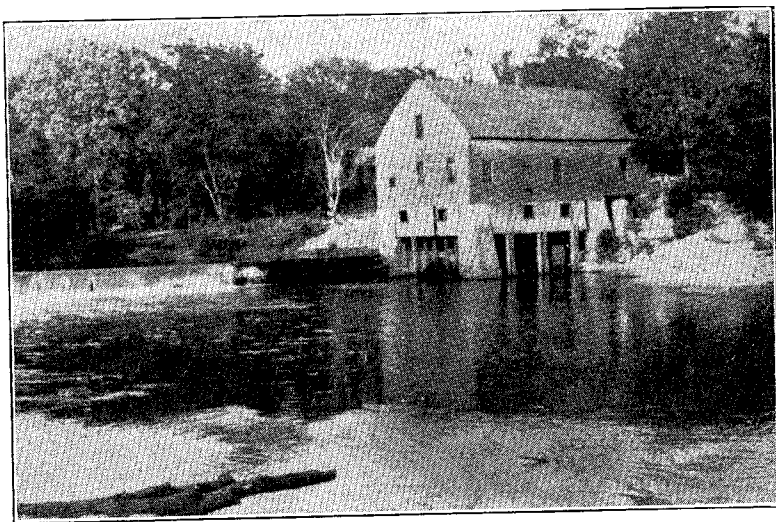


FIG. 8.—Smith's Mill.

2. *Water Supply.*—(a) *Domestic.* Decatur owes much to glaciation; in addition to the rich morainic soil put down by the ice, the glacial sands are the source of pure drinking water. There is an especially good supply of underground water in the west section of the town along the Wabash tracks, which the Polar Ice Plant and the Decatur Ice Cream Company tap. Inhabitants speak of there being an "underground lake" here, but well borings have proved it to be a lense of glacial sand and gravel. Water was also pumped from the river but towards the end of the 19th century the available supply was not sufficient for the increased needs of industrial plants in the city. Projects were considered for the damming of the river to form a lake. The floodplain of the Sangamon, 150-200 feet wide, which had developed in the sand and gravel of a valley train left by the glacial waters, was dammed in 1923 to form a lake 13 miles long, which is now the chief source of the city's water supply, as well as being of great value for recreational purposes. Enough water is impounded in this way to last the city two years without a drop of rain.

⁴ U. of I. Agric. Exp. Stat. County Soil Report. No. 45, 1929.

⁵ Interview with Mr. Clarence Deakins, James Millikin University, Decatur, Feb., 1934.

⁶ Fifteenth Census of U. S. 1930.

(b) *Power.* Waterways were of importance to the early settlers, not only on account of the adjoining woodland but also for power, as coal was not mined until 1881. The streams were sluggish and there were no falls, so that dams were built to supply power for the mills. There were several of these for grinding grain. Smith's Mill on the Sangamon, near Mt. Auburn, about half a mile from the old Lincoln Trail, now the Springfield Post Road, ground corn and wheat (Fig. 8, view of Smith's Mill). Coulter's Mill about three miles above the headwaters of the present Lake Decatur, and remembered by some of the oldest inhabitants, was also a grist mill. There were many other small establishments of this kind along the river banks.

3. *Minerals.*—Mineral wealth, so great in other parts of the State, was not an early attraction in the Decatur area. At first the local timber supplies were sufficient for building material and fuel. As the village increased in size, bricks were hauled in, mostly from St. Louis and Edgar County. In 1852, however, William Martin began the manufacture of brick in Decatur.⁷

The lime and clay deposits of Decatur were accessible and sufficient for local needs until rail facilities made it possible to obtain a greater variety of bricks from Danville and stone from out-of-state quarries. Coal was first discovered in Decatur in 1874, but shafts were not sunk until 1881, when the Decatur Coal Company was organized.⁸ At present the Macon County Coal Company works the one mine in Decatur, and supplies coal for domestic purposes in the city; some is also shipped out to nearby towns. The one shaft which is 625 feet deep, is at 700 South Main Street where the coal seam is 4½ feet thick.⁹ The output has decreased somewhat in recent years. In 1927 it was 128,220 tons and in 1931 it had dropped to 82,274 tons. It did not operate in 1932 but now is working full time and employing 340 men.¹⁰

4. *Native Vegetation.*—Until 1830 the prairies were unsettled. In the decade 1830-1840 prairie land was commonly sold for \$5.00 per acre and often less, and woodland for \$35.00 per acre, as at that time timber was the only building material and supply of fuel. During this decade, however, the value of the prairies for cropland came to be realized; this fact did not affect the need for timber and the value of woodland, but by 1856, owing to the development of rail and water transportation, coal, wood and other building materials could be brought to the prairies, and land values were reversed—prairie land advanced to \$50.00 per acre and the \$50.00 timberland dropped to \$25.00 per acre. Woodland came to be regarded as an encumbrance, and was used for grazing or cleared for crops.¹¹

GROWTH OF DECATUR BEFORE THE RAILROADS

1. *Agriculture and Early Industries.*—Although the population of Decatur was scarcely 600 at the time, by 1839, several industries had been started. One of the most interesting was the ox mill for grinding corn, located where the Town Branch now crosses East Prairie Street at Broadway. An establishment which was saw mill, grist mill and carding factory, all in one, was opened in 1839. There was also a saddlery and harness shop, a distillery, and a chair factory. These few examples are sufficient to show that the early industries in Decatur grew out of the needs of the settlers in the immediate locality. Lack of transportation in the thirties made it almost impossible to obtain these necessities, much less any luxuries, from a distance. Apart from these little factories and shops, most of the people worked on the land. Crops and livestock were of primary importance, and each household had to be self-sufficient.

Review, Decatur, Ill., 1930, pp. 189 and 191.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 287 and 328.

⁹ Interview with Mr. D. W. Beggs, General Manager, Macon County Coal Co.

¹⁰ Information supplied by Mr. E. T. Benson, Ill. State Geol. Survey, Urbana, Ill.

¹¹ Telford, C. J., Third Report on a Forestry Survey of Illinois. Ill. Nat. Hist. Survey, Urbana, Ill., 1926, pp. 6 and 7.

As we have seen, it was in the decade 1830-1840 that the great fertility of the prairie came to be realized. In 1833 the first plow was invented which could cut the prairie sod. John Deere started making these, using old steel saws for plow shares. He established the factory at Moline which still bears his name.¹² Crop yields of corn, wheat, barley, oats and flax were high and the indigenous blue stem grass and white clover were fine fodder for cattle; fruit and vegetables were plentiful, and from all accounts the Decatur farmers in 1840 were well fed and prosperous, so much so that they were continually agitating for means of transportation to market an increasing surplus of their farm products.

2. *Transportation.*—In the forties, Illinois had various detached beginnings of the railroads, but owing to the lack of funds none of these was completed, except the Northern Cross Railroad from Meredosia, on the Illinois River, to Jacksonville, which was extended, by private capital, to Springfield in 1842.¹³ As the schemes for railroads and waterways had failed, highway travel increased with the increasing agricultural surplus. The roads, however, were very poor and there was no system for maintaining or improving them (Fig. 2, map of Illinois showing stage routes in 1851).

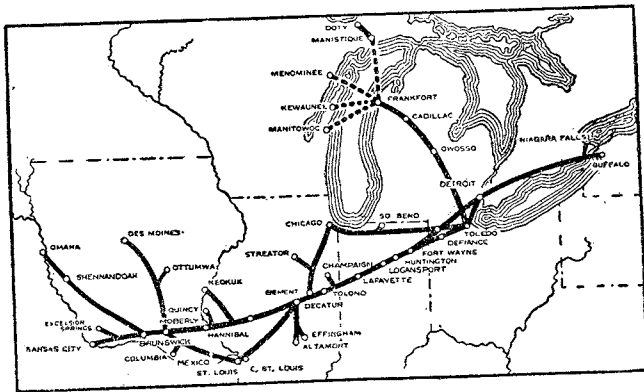


FIG. 9.—Map of Wabash Railroad.

THE COMING OF THE RAILROADS

1. *Two Main Lines Cross at Decatur.*—In 1854 the entire population of Decatur turned out to witness the coming of the first railroad train. The greatest need of this town for twenty-five years had been transportation, either water or rail, and at last its hopes were realized! The coming of that Wabash train had been eagerly anticipated for months. Two railroads had been racing to Decatur, each the extension of a large railway system. They arrived almost simultaneously, the Wabash and the Illinois Central.

As we have seen, railroad history in Illinois began with the Northern Cross Railroad in 1837, which reached Decatur in 1854. During these years another pioneer railroad was pushed to the southwest out of Toledo. The two roads were ultimately brought together and incorporated as the Toledo, Wabash and Western and was finally known as the Wabash Railroad (Fig. 9, map of Wabash Railroad).

The Illinois Central Railroad Company was incorporated in 1851, and a few years later the road was completed and in operation between Cairo and Dunleith on Mississippi River. When the first train on the Illinois Central

¹² Information supplied by Prof. R. I. Shawl, Dept. of Agric. Engineering, Univ. of Ill., Urbana, Ill.

¹³ Richmond, Mabel. Cent. Hist. of Decatur, p. 79.

line entered Decatur, the city became the crossing place of these two great lines, the Wabash and the Illinois Central. The Union Depot was built at the point of intersection, to be used by both companies. Decatur was established as a railroad center and her future was assured.

2. *Immediate Effects of the Railroads.*—The immediate effect of the railroads on the growth of the city may be seen in the population increase in the decade 1850-1860, from 600 to nearly 4,000. This increase began a few years before the railroads were started when it was rumored that the lines would pass through Decatur. The years 1856 and 1857 marked the arrival of two men whose names were to loom large in the industrial history of Decatur. These were David S. Shellabarger, who developed the milling industry, and Hieronymus Mueller, who opened a small gun shop on West Main

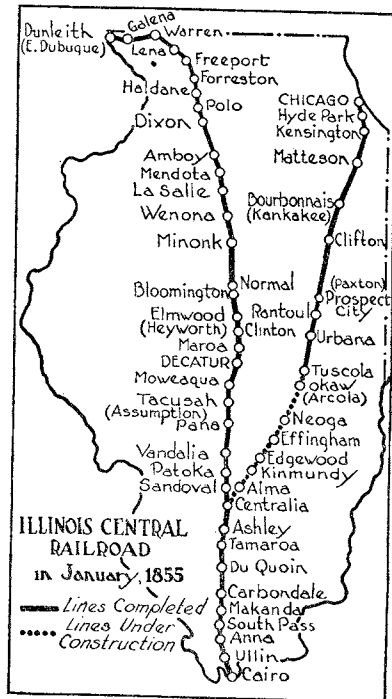


FIG. 10.—First map of Illinois Central Railroad
(After Richmond, Mabel E., *Centennial History of Decatur and Macon County*, p. 211.)

Street where he made and repaired guns. His flint-lock gun was soon much in demand as Macon County was then well supplied with game, the materials used for gun construction being brought by rail from the Middle Atlantic States.¹⁴ The success of these two concerns was largely due to the transportation facilities which made it possible for products of the Shellabarger Mills to be easily and cheaply marketed, and enabled Mueller to obtain materials for his gun shop, to which he soon added plumbers' repairs and hardware.

¹⁴ Roche, J. W. *Industrial Relations in Three Decatur Plants—Staley's, Mueller's and the Wabash Shops.* M. A. Thesis in Economics, Univ. of Illinois, 1932, p. 3.

3. *Progress of Industry Backed by Agriculture.*—By 1860 Illinois had become the center of the agricultural life of the nation. During the Civil War the demand for foodstuffs for the Union armies, together with poor European harvests, served to stimulate prices. There was a withdrawal of a quarter of a million workers, mainly from the farms of the State, to join the Union forces, so the use of farm machinery increased greatly.¹⁵ Decatur, being in the midst of the richest farming section, it was there that several inventions in connection with farm machinery were made or improved at this time. Haworth invented the check rower and corn planter. Barber and Hawley opened a plant for the manufacture of gang plows, cultivators and other agricultural implements. John Beall invented his corn sheller in 1864 and started its manufacture. In 1867 a linseed oil mill was started which, together with other smaller concerns,¹⁶ based on agricultural products and aided by good transportation, showed that industry was progressing steadily with agriculture. While the farmers were selling the products of the soil, the manufacturers were busy providing the farm implements.

THE PRESENT DAY CITY

1. *City Expansion and Increase of Industries.*—In 1900 the population of Decatur was nearly 21,000 and by 1930 it had increased to 57,510. The population curve is a normal one, as seen in comparison with those of other U. S. cities of the same size, for example, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Springfield, Missouri. Along with the increase in population the city pattern has become star-shaped as a result of what is termed "axial growth."¹⁷ During the periods of city expansion there have been adjustments to the physical conditions which have resulted in elongated star points to the east and west. A comparison of the maps of the electoral divisions of the city for 1907 and 1927 brings out this east-west extension: the industrial section on the east and the residential section on the west.

The old Union Depot, as we have seen, was built at the intersection of the Illinois Central and Wabash lines, near what was then (1855), the eastern boundary of the city. Later the Wabash roundhouse and shops utilized, as an ideal site, the level stretches of land east of the depot, along the Wabash tracks (Figs. 4 and 5). Attracted by the railroad facilities, Staley's, Mueller's, the Mississippi Structural Steel, the Decatur Brass Works, and many other industrial concerns, built their factories in this section, which is now fringed with the small dwellings of the industrial workers.

In 1900 James Millikin presented Oakland Park, on the western edge of the city to Decatur as the grounds for the university which was named after him. Later the Anna B. Millikin Home and the Art Institute were built in this district. These fine buildings with their beautiful grounds drew residents to this section who could afford to build comfortable homes in attractive gardens. Farview Park and the wooded banks of Stevens Creek add beauty to this western extension of the city, and owing to the direction of the prevailing winds, the west of the town is cleaner than the east side, the smoke and soot from the factories being carried eastward away from the city, so the star points extending out to the west and northwest are today considered the best residential sections.

2. *Growth of Industries.*—The Census of Manufactures in 1929 gave reports of 100 Decatur industrial establishments, with products valued at more than \$52,000,000. Of these concerns the three that employ the largest number of workers are the Wabash Locomotive and Car Shops, the Mueller Manufacturing Company, and the Staley Manufacturing Company. As be-

¹⁵ Poggi, E. Muriel. *Settlement and Development of the Prairie Province of Illinois*. Ill. State Acad. of Sci. Trans. V. 24, No. 2, 1931, pp. 401-409.

¹⁶ Richmond, Mabel. *Cent. Hist. of Decatur*, pp. 265-266.

¹⁷ Dorau, H. B. and Hinman, A. C. *Urban Land Economics*, Macmillan, 1928, pp. 62-64.

fore stated the Wabash Railroad reached Decatur in 1854 and the line from Decatur to St. Louis was built in 1869. In that year the first Wabash round-house was built in Decatur. In 1884 the Wabash Car Shops were moved there from Peoria. Since that time Wabash interests have increased in Decatur, which has since been called "the hub of the Wabash" with spokes radiating to Kansas City, St. Louis, Chicago, and Buffalo. Through Decatur important freight is routed from Kansas City to Buffalo without entering the congested terminals of Chicago or St. Louis.

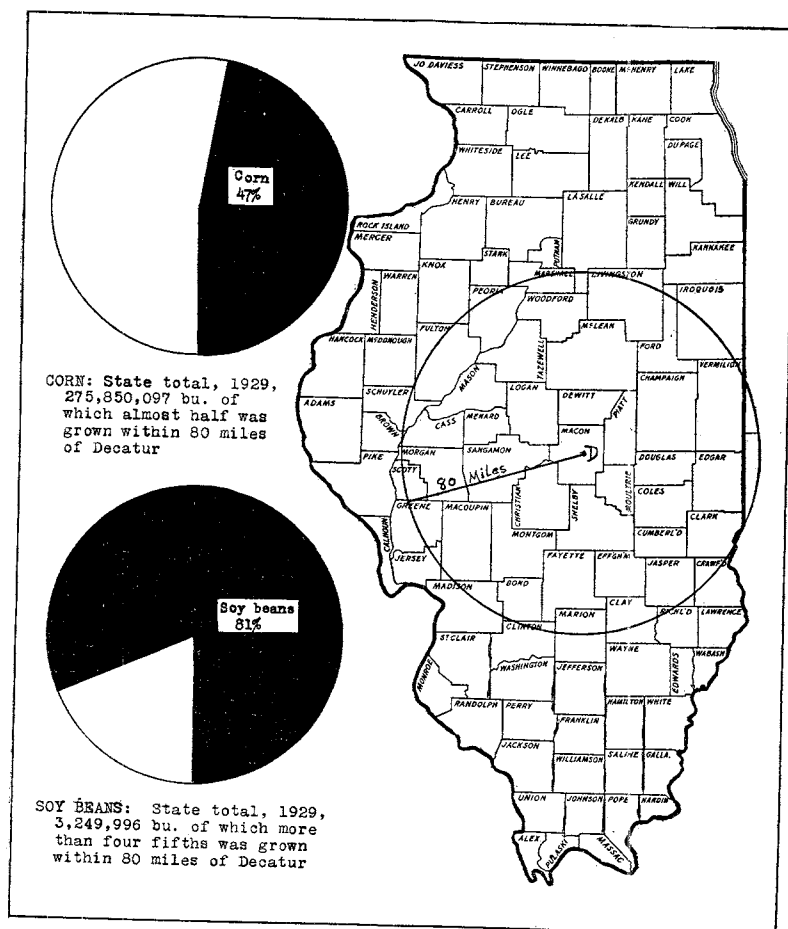


FIG. 11.—Map showing corn and soybean production within 80 miles of Decatur.

Hieronymus Mueller established his gun shop in Decatur soon after the railroads reached the city. It is largely due to the transportation facilities that this little business has become the great manufacturing plant that it is today. From gun repairs, plumbers' supplies, hardware, to his water main tapping machine, gas main taps and all kinds of faucets, the variety of products has increased, the large section which manufactures vitreous ware being one of the company's latest additions. The Mueller Company supplies what are termed "capital goods", that is goods made for long service, and

requiring a small amount of material but much skill. Fuel supplies and raw materials are assembled from many distant fields, but the value added by manufacture together with favorable freight rates makes this profitable. The tonnage of incoming freight to Muellers is about nine times as great as the outgoing freight.¹⁸

The Staley Company was founded much later than the Mueller Company and under different circumstances. Mr. A. E. Staley bought a bankrupt factory in Decatur in 1909. Before he did this, however, he was familiar with the city and the agricultural resources of the surrounding country.¹⁹ The original plant covered only a small acreage, but at the present time the company owns 382 acres in Decatur and 72 acres in Peoria.²⁰ In 1912 corn grinding operations began with a capacity grind of 1,000 bushels a day, the manufactures being pearl and powdered starch, crude oil and gluten feed. Since then other products have been added until today with a grind capacity of 50,000 bushels per day they are manufacturing, packing and shipping 70 or more varieties and fluidities of starch alone, to say nothing of many other products, such as corn sirups, sugars, paper mill products, salad and cooking oils, soy bean products, and candies.²¹

The location of the Staley plant is an excellent one from both geographic and economic points of view. The Bureau of Census Reports show that for the past 40 years the center of corn production has been in the state of Illinois, and within a distance of 60 miles of Decatur.²² The accompanying map (Fig. 11) shows the part of the state within a radius of 80 miles of Decatur. This area produced 130,911,403 bushels of corn in 1929, or almost one-half of the corn produced in the state for that year.²³

The manufacture of soy bean products is a recent development. It is an adaptation to the trend towards greater diversification of crops in the Corn Belt. The recent increase in acreage and production of the soy bean in Illinois is very marked. The production for the whole state in 1919 was only 23,812 bushels; in 1929 it had risen to 3,249,996 bushels, more than two-thirds of which (2,643,462 bushels) were raised within a radius of 80 miles of Decatur.²⁴ The grind of the industry would have been considerably higher during the last few years if the bean crop had been larger.²⁵

Staley's has in operation an elevator with a storage capacity of over 4,000,000 bushels of grain; in addition transportation facilities are such that Decatur can receive shipments from all the grain receiving centers within a maximum of three days. Should there be a shortage in the local supplies, the markets of St. Louis, Chicago, Indianapolis and Peoria can supply grain to Decatur within 24 hours, while Omaha is but three days distant.

3. *Decatur as a Grain Market.*—Decatur is one of the four leading markets for Illinois corn; Chicago, St. Louis, Peoria being the others. This

¹⁸ Interview with Mr. E. H. Langdon, Mueller Co., Decatur, Feb. 17, 1934. Some of Mueller's supplies and their sources are as follows:

Coal obtained chiefly from Pana, Ill. and Kentucky.

Coke obtained chiefly from Indianapolis and West Virginia.

Fuel Oil is piped from Texas.

Copper from the Great Lakes Region.

Iron from St. Louis and Chicago.

Abrasives from Niagara.

Tin from Malaya via London.

Ball Clay from England.

Kaolin from Georgia.

Flint from N. Illinois near Ottawa.

¹⁹ See Pamphlet by Staley Manufacturing Co., "To Our Better Acquaintance,"

pp. 1-5.

²⁰ Roche, J. W. Industrial Relations in Three Decatur Plants. U. of I. Thesis, 1932, pp. 7 and 8.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Wylie, Clifton J. Decatur as a Location for a Corn Cereal Mill. Thesis, School of Commerce and Finance, James Millikin University, Decatur, 1925.

²³ Fifteenth Census of U. S., 1930.

²⁴ Fifteenth Census of U. S., 1930.

²⁵ Information supplied by Mr. E. K. Scheiter, Pres. Staley Sales Corporation, April 10, 1934.

is largely due to the fact that Staley's Plant is located here, and also to the city's development as a distributing point for grain. Decatur was reported as handling about 25 per cent of the corn shipments from the central area during each year, as well as a considerable quantity of corn from conveniently located points in other areas, as the results of transportation facilities and low freight rates.²⁶

4. *Decatur as a Route Center.*—In spite of the fact that poor transportation was the greatest drawback to the early development of Decatur, the city has become a railroad center of considerable importance in the state. Five railways serve the city; the Wabash, the Illinois Central, the Baltimore and Ohio, the Pennsylvania, and the Illinois Terminal System (electric). As we have seen, the main lines of the Illinois Central run from north to south across the state, while the Wabash lines extend generally in an east-west direction. Taking the records for a day in February, 1934, the total of all Wabash trains entering and leaving Decatur was 85.²⁷ On the Illinois Central lines the total number of trains passing through Decatur daily is scheduled as 22.²⁸ Decatur is on the lines of five state paved road routes. Two of these are Federal Routes, one being part of the U. S. Highway 51, from Lake Superior to the Gulf, and others being sections of U. S. Highway 36, from Colorado to the Atlantic.

In 1830 the farmers of Decatur were clamoring for more and better roads. One hundred years later the communication lines which converged on Decatur proved to be the city's greatest asset. Man's adjustment is seen in his development of the nodality of this rich prairie section to such an extent that industries were established that were not necessarily dependent on products of the prairie, but were attracted to, and made prosperous by that nodality.

CONCLUSIONS

It cannot be said for Decatur that its location is the result of any of the interesting physical conditions that were referred to in the opening paragraphs, but it may be claimed that the site was the result of a "geographic accident". There were no doubt many locations in the strip of prairie surveyed by the Illinois Central Company that were just as suitable for settlement as Decatur, but when the east-west line of the Wabash crossed the north-south line of the Illinois Central in 1854, Decatur received an impetus to development that was denied to the villages to the north or south.

This route convergence added value to the fertile cropland, making it possible to market an increasing surplus of grain. As industries based upon agriculture, and later, manufactures independent of agriculture, have developed, it appears that Decatur's prosperity is more dependent on the railroads than on anything else. Some cities of Decatur's size have recently become less dependent on the railroads owing to the development of bus and air transportation: Decatur cannot do this to any extent. Owing to her type of industries, the railroads are essential.

The city has suffered more than many others during the depression because of the important part played by the railroads in its economic life. Even the corn-products plant, the location of which was the direct result of the geographic environment, is now just as dependent on the railroads as any of the other industries, as it has outgrown the corn supplies of the immediate locality, and, together with the other industrial plants, depends largely upon the railroads for its existence. So although Decatur is served by an excellent system of hard roads and has the beginnings of two airports, the railroads have been, and still continue to be her salvation.

²⁶ Stewart, C. L. et al. Market Destinations of Illinois Grain. U. of I. Agric. Exp. Sta. Bull. 315, 1928, p. 86.

²⁷ Fifty-five manifest freight, 18 local freight, 12 passenger trains. Interview with Mr. Harold Eislle, February 17, 1934.

²⁸ Four passenger, 4 local freight, 14 manifest freight. Information supplied by Mr. L. C. Snell, I. C. Railroad, Decatur.